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MEMORIES OF
PRESIDENT LINCOLN

BY WALT WHITMAN



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MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOOR-
YARD BLOOM'D

1

WHEN lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western
sky in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-
returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you
bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star
in the west,
And thought of him I love.

3

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

2

- O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd—O the black murk
that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O
helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free
my soul.

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house
near the white-wash'd palings,
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-
shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate
with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle—and from this
bush in the dooryard,
With delicate-colour'd blossoms and heart-
shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break.

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.
Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding
the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life (for well, dear
brother, I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st
surely die).

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid
cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where
lately the violets peep'd from the ground,
spotting the grey débris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the
lanes, passing the endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain
from its shroud in the dark-brown fields
uprisen,
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and
pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in
the grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud
darkening the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the
cities draped in black,

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

With the show of the States themselves as of
crape-veil'd women standing,
With processions long and winding and the
flambeaus of the night,
With the countless torches lit, with the silent
sea of faces and the unbarred heads,
With the waiting depôt, the arriving coffin,
and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the shout
and voices rising strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges
pour'd around the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering or-
gans—where amid these you journey,
With the tolling, tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7

(Nor for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I
bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant
a song for you, O sane and sacred death.
All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and early
lilies,
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms
the first,

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the
bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you and the coffins all of you, O death.)

8

O western orb, sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a
month since I walk'd,
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell as you
bent to me night after night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if
to my side (while the other stars all
look'd on),
As we wander'd together the solemn night
(for something I know not what kept me
from sleep),
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim
of the west how full you were of woe,
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze
in the cool transparent night,
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost
in the netherward black of the night,
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as
where you, sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

9

Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer, bashful and tender, I hear your
notes, I hear your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star
has detain'd me,
The star my departing comrade holds and
detains me.

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead
one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large
sweet soul that has gone?
And what shall my perfume be for the grave
of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from
the Western sea, till there on the prairies
meeting,
These and with these and the breath of my
chant,
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang
on the walls,
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and
homes,

With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and
the grey smoke lucid and bright,

With floods of the yellow gold of the gor-
geous, indolent, sinking sun, burning, ex-
panding the air,

With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and
the pale green leaves of the trees prolific,

In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast
of the river, with a wind-dapple here and
there,

With ranging hills on the banks, with many
a line against the sky, and shadows,

And the city at hand with dwellings so dense,
and stacks of chimneys,

And all the scenes of life and the workshops,
and the workmen homeward returning.

12

Lo, body and soul—this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and the spar-
kling and hurrying tides, and the ships,

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

The varied and ample land, the South and the
North in the light, Ohio's shores and
flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd
with grass and corn.
Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and
haughty,
The violet and purple morn with just-felt
breezes,
The gentle soft-born measureless light,
The miracle spreading bathing all, the ful-
fill'd noon,
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night
and the stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man
and land.

13

Sing on, sing on, you grey-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your
chant from the bushes,
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars
and pines.

Sing on, dearest brother, warble your reedy
song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost
woe,

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

O liquid and free and tender!
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous
singer!
You only I hear—yet the star holds me (but
will soon depart),
Yet the lilac with mastering odour holds me.

14

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
In the close of the day with its light and the
fields of spring, and the farmers preparing
their crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my land
with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty (after the per-
turb'd winds and the storms),
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon
swift passing, and the voices of children
and women,
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the
ships how they sail'd,
And the summer approaching with richness,
and the fields all busy with labour,
And the infinite separate houses, how they all
went on, each with its meals and minutia
of daily usages,
And the streets how their throbbings throb'd,
and the cities pent—lo, then and there,

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

Falling upon them all and among them all,
 enveloping me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black
 trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred
 knowledge of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking
 one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the
 other side of me,
And I in the middle as with companions, and
 as holding the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that
 talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path
 by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly
 pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
The grey-brown bird I know receiv'd us com-
 rades three,
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse
 for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly
 pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my comrades
 in the night,
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song
 of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving,
 arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowl-
 edge curious,
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise!
 praise!
For the sure-encircling arms of cool-encircling
 death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft
 feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest
 welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above
 all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must
 indeed come, come unfalteringly.*

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

*Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I
joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O death.*

*From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adorn-
ments and feastings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the
high-spread sky are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and
thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering
wave whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-
veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the
myriad fields and the prairies wide,
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teem-
ing wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee,
O death.*

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

15

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the grey-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling
the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-
perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes
unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of
battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and
pierc'd with missiles I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the
smoke, and torn and bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the
staffs (and all in silence),
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw
them,

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

I saw the débris and débris of all the slain
soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother
suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing
comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

16

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades'
hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the
tallying song of my soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet vary-
ing ever-altering song,
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, ris-
ing and falling, flooding the night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and
warning, and yet again bursting with
joy,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of
the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard
from recesses,

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped
leaves,
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming,
returning with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting
the west, communing with thee,
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the
night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out
of the night,
The song, the wondrous chant of the grey-
brown bird,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in
my soul,
With the lustrous and drooping star with the
countenance full of woe,
With the holders holding my hand nearing
the call of the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their
memory ever to keep, for the dead I loved
so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days
and lands—and this for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant
of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars
dusk and dim.

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is
done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize
we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people
all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel
grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear
the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you
the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for
you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their
eager faces turning:
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale
and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no
pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voy-
age closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in
with object won ;
 Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells !
 But I with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY

(*May 4, 1865*)

HUSH'D be the camps to-day,
And soldiers, let us drape our war-worn
 weapons,
And each with musing soul retire to celebrate,
Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts,
Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's dark
 events,
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

But sing, poet, in our name,
Sing of the love we bore him—because you,
 dweller in camps, know it truly.

As they invault the coffin there,
Sing—as they close the doors of earth upon
 him—one verse,
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN

THIS dust was once the man,
Gentle, plain, just, and resolute, under whose
cautious hand,
Against the foulest crime in history known
in any land or age,
Was saved the Union of these States.

DRUM-TAPS

FIRST O SONGS FOR A PRELUDE

FIRST O songs for a prelude,
Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum
pride and joy in my city,
How she led the rest to arms, how she gave
the cue,
How at once with lithe limb unwaiting a
moment she sprang,
(O superb! O Manhattan, my own, my
peerless!
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in
crisis! O truer than steel!)
How you sprang—how you threw off the cos-
tumes of peace with indifferent hand,
How your soft opera-music changed, and the
drum and fife were heard in their stead,
How you led to the war (that shall serve for
our prelude, songs of soldiers),
How Manhattan drum-taps led.

DRUM-TAPS

Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers
parading,
Forty years as a pageant, till unawares the
lady of this teeming and turbulent city,
Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her in-
calculable wealth,
With her million children around her, sud-
denly,
At dead of night, at news from the south,
Incens'd struck with clinch'd hand the pave-
ment.

A shock electric, the night sustain'd it,
Till with ominous hum our hive at daybreak
pour'd out its myriads.
From the houses then and the workshops,
and through all the doorways,
Leapt they tumultuous, and lo! Manhattan
arming.

To the drum-taps prompt,
The young men falling in and arming.
The mechanics arming (the trowel, the jack-
plane, the black-smith's hammer, tost aside
with precipitation),
The lawyer leaving his office and arming, the
judge leaving the court.
The driver deserting his wagon in the street,
jumping down, throwing the reins abruptly
down on the horses' backs,

DRUM-TAPS

The salesman leaving the store, the boss, book-keeper, porter, all leaving;
Squads gather everywhere by common consent and arm,
The new recruits, even boys, the old men show them how to wear their accoutrements, they buckle the straps carefully,
Outdoors arming, indoors arming, the flash of the musket-barrels,
The white tents cluster in camps, the arm'd sentries around, the sunrise cannon and again at sunset,
Arm'd regiments arrive every day, pass through the city, and embark from the wharves,
(How good they look as they tramp down to the river, sweaty, with their guns on their shoulders!
How I love them! how I could hug them, with their brown faces and their clothes and knapsacks cover'd with dust!)
The blood of the city up—arm'd! arm'd! the cry everywhere,
The flags flung out from the steeples of churches and from all the public buildings and stores,
The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son kisses his mother,
(Loth is the mother to part, yet not a word does she speak to detain him),

DRUM-TAPS

The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen
preceding, clearing the way,

The unpent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the
crowd for their favourites,

The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold,
drawn along, rumble lightly over the
stones,

(Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,
Soon unlimber'd to begin the red business) ;

All the mutter of preparation, all the deter-
min'd arming,

The hospital service, the lint, bandages, and
medicines,

The women volunteering for nurses, the work
begun for in earnest, no mere parade now ;

War! an arm'd race is advancing! the wel-
come for battle, no turning away ;

War! be it weeks, months, or years, an arm'd
race is advancing to welcome it.

Mannahatta a-march—and it's O to sing it
well!

It's O for a manly life in the camp.

And the sturdy artillery,

The guns bright as gold, the work for giants,
to serve well the guns,

Unlimber them! (no more as the past forty
years for salutes for courtesies merely,

Put in something now besides powder and
wadding).

DRUM-TAPS

And you lady of ships, you Mannahatta,
Old matron of this proud, friendly, turbulent
city,
Often in peace and wealth you were pensive
or covertly frown'd amid all your chil-
dren,
But now you smile with joy exulting old
Mannahatta.

DRUM-TAPS

EIGHTEEN SIXTY-ONE

ARM'D year—year of the struggle,
No dainty rhymes or sentimental love verses
for you, terrible year,
Not you as some pale poetling seated at a
desk lisping cadenzas piano,
But as a strong man erect, clothed in blue
clothes, advancing, carrying a rifle on your
shoulder,
With well-gristled body and sunburnt face
and hands, with a knife in the belt at
your side,
As I heard you shouting loud, your sonorous
voice ringing across the continent,
Your masculine voice, O year, as rising amid
the great cities,
Amid the men of Manhattan I saw you as one
of the workmen, the dwellers in Manhat-
tan,

DRUM-TAPS

Or with large steps crossing the prairies out
of Illinois and Indiana,
Rapidly crossing the West with springy gait
and descending the Alleghanies,
Or down from the great lakes or in Pennsyl-
vania, or on deck along the Ohio river,
Or southward along the Tennessee or Cumber-
land rivers, or at Chattanooga on the
mountain top,
Saw I your gait and saw I your sinewy limbs
clothed in blue, bearing weapons, robust
year,
Heard your determin'd voice launch'd forth
again, and again,
Year that suddenly sang by the mouths of
the round-lipp'd cannon,
I repeat you, hurrying, crashing, sad, dis-
tracted year.

DRUM-TAPS

BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!

BEAT! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows—through doors—burst
like a ruthless force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the con-
gregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying;
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happi-
ness must he have now with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing
his field or gathering his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so
shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of
wheels in the streets;
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in
the houses? no sleepers must sleep in
those beds,
No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers
or speculators—would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the
singer attempt to sing?

DRUM-TAPS

Would the lawyer rise in the court to state
his case before the judge?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles
wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or
prayer,
Mind not the old man beseeching the young
man,
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the
mother's entreaties,
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where
they lie awaiting the hearses,
So strong you thump, O terrible drums—so
loud you bugles blow.

DRUM-TAPS

FROM PAUMANOK STARTING I FLY LIKE A BIRD

FROM Paumanok starting I fly like a bird,
Around and around to soar to sing the idea of
all,
To the north betaking myself to sing there
arctic songs,
To Kanada till I absorb Kanada in myself,
to Michigan then,
To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their
songs (they are inimitable);
Then to Ohio and Indiana to sing theirs, to
Missouri and Kansas and Arkansas to
sing theirs,
To Tennessee and Kentucky, to the Caro-
linas and Georgia to sing theirs,
To Texas and so along up toward California,
to roam accepted everywhere;
To sing first (to the tap of the war-drum if
need be),
The idea of all, of the Western world one and
inseparable,
And then the song of each member of these
States.

DRUM-TAPS

SONG OF THE BANNER AT DAYBREAK

Poet

O A new song, a free song,
Flapping, flapping, flapping, flapping, by
 sounds, by voices clearer,
By the wind's voice and that of the drum,
By the banner's voice and child's voice and
 sea's voice and father's voice,
Low on the ground and high in the air,
On the ground where father and child stand,
In the upward air where their eyes turn,
Where the banner at daybreak is flapping.

Words! book-words! what are you?
Words no more, for hearken and see,
My song is there in the open air, and I must
 sing,
With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

I'll weave the chord and twine in,
Man's desire and babe's desire, I'll twine them
 in, I'll put in life,
I'll put the bayonet's flashing point, I'll let
 bullets and slugs whizz,
(As one carrying a symbol and menace far
 into the future,

DRUM-TAPS

Crying with trumpet voice, *Arouse and beware! Beware and arouse!*)
I'll pour the verse with streams of blood, full
of volition, full of joy,
Then loosen, launch forth, to go and compete,
With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

Pennant

Come up here, bard, bard,
Come up here, soul, soul,
Come up here, dear little child,
To fly in the clouds and winds with me, and
play with the measureless light.

Child

Father, what is that in the sky beckoning
to me with long finger?
And what does it say to me all the while?

Father

Nothing, my babe, you see in the sky,
And nothing at all to you it says—but look
you, my babe,
Look at these dazzling things in the houses,
and see you the money-shops opening,
And see you the vehicles preparing to crawl
along the streets with goods;

DRUM-TAPS

These, ah, these, how valued and toil'd for
these!

How envied by all the earth.

Poet

Fresh and rosy red the sun is mounting high,
On floats the sea in distant blue careering
through its channels,

On floats the wind over the breast of the sea
setting in toward land,

The great steady wind from west or west-
by-south,

Floating so buoyant with milk-white foam
on the waters.

But I am not the sea nor the red sun,
I am not the wind with girlish laughter,
Not the immense wind which strengthens, not
the wind which lashes,

Not the spirit that ever lashes its own body
to terror and death,

But I am that which unseen comes and sings,
sings, sings,

Which babbles in brooks and scoots in showers
on the land,

Which the birds know in the woods morn-
ings and evenings,

And the shore-sands know and the hissing
wave, and that banner and pennant,

Aloft there flapping and flapping.

DRUM-TAPS

Child

O father it is alive—it is full of people—it has
children,
O now it seems to me it is talking to its
children,
I hear it—it talks to me—O it is wonderful!
O it stretches—it spreads and runs so fast—
O my father,
It is so broad it covers the whole sky.

Father

Cease, cease, my foolish babe,
What you are saying is sorrowful to me, much
it displeases me;
Behold with the rest again I say, behold not
banners and pennants aloft,
But the well-prepared pavements behold, and
mark the solid-wall'd houses.

Banner and Pennant

Speak to the child O bard out of Manhattan,
To our children all, or north or south of
Manhattan,
Point this day, leaving all the rest, to us over
all—and yet we know not why,
For what are we, mere strips of cloth profiting
nothing,
Only flapping in the wind?

DRUM-TAPS

Poet

I hear and see not strips of cloth alone,
I hear the tramp of armies, I hear the chal-
lenging sentry,
I hear the jubilant shouts of millions of men,
I hear Liberty!
I hear the drums beat and the trumpets blow-
ing,
I myself move abroad swift-rising flying then,
I use the wings of the land-bird and use the
wings of the sea-bird, and look down as
from a height,
I do not deny the precious results of peace, I
see populous cities with wealth incalcu-
lable,
I see numberless farms, I see the farmers
working in their fields or barns,
I see mechanics working, I see buildings every-
where founded, going up, or finish'd,
I see trains of cars swiftly speeding along
railroad tracks drawn by the locomotives,
I see the stores, depôts, of Boston, Baltimore,
Charleston, New Orleans,
I see far in the West the immense area of
grain, I dwell awhile hovering,
I pass to the lumber forests of the North, and
again to the Southern plantation, and
again to California;

DRUM-TAPS

Sweeping the whole I see the countless profit,
the busy gatherings, earn'd wages,
See the Identity formed out of thirty-eight
spacious and haughty States (and many
more to come),
See forts on the shores of harbours, see ships
sailing in and out ;
Then over all (aye! aye!) my little and
lengthen'd pennant shaped like a sword,
Runs swiftly up indicating war and defiance—
and now the halyards have rais'd it,
Side of my banner broad and blue, side of my
starry banner,
Discarding peace over all the sea and land.

Banner and Pennant

Yet louder, higher, stronger, bard! yet farther,
wider cleave!
No longer let our children deem us riches
and peace alone,
We may be terror and carnage, and are so
now,
Not now are we any one of these spacious
and haughty States (nor any five, nor
ten),
Nor market nor depôt we, nor money-bank in
the city,
But these and all, and the brown and spread-
ing land, and the mines below, are ours,

DRUM-TAPS

And the shores of the sea are ours, and the
rivers great and small,
And the fields they moisten, and the crops
and the fruits are ours,
Bays and channels and ships sailing in and
out are ours—while we over all,
Over the area spread below, the three or four
millions of square miles, the capitals,
The forty millions of people,—O bard! in life
and death supreme,
We, even we, henceforth flaunt out masterful,
high up above,
Not for the present alone, for a thousand years
chanting through you,
This song to the soul of one poor little child.

Child

O my father, I like not the houses,
They will never to me be anything, nor do
I like money,
But to mount up there I would like, O father
dear, that banner I like,
That pennant I would be and must be.

Father

Child of mine, you fill me with anguish,
To be that pennant would be too fearful,
Little you know what it is this day, and after
this day, for ever,

DRUM-TAPS

It is to gain **nothing**, but risk and defy every-
thing,
Forward to stand in front of wars—and O,
such wars!—what have you to do with
them?
With passions of demons, slaughter, premature
death?

Banner

Demons and death then I sing,
Put in all, aye all will I, sword-shaped pen-
nant for war,
And a pleasure new and ecstatic, and the
prattled yearning of children,
Blent with the sounds of the peaceful land
and the liquid wash of the sea,
And the black ships fighting on the sea en-
velop'd in smoke,
And the icy cool of the far, far north, with
rustling cedars and pines,
And the whirr of drums and the sound of
soldiers marching, and the hot sun shining
south,
And the beach-waves combing over the beach
on my Eastern shore, and my Western
shore the same,
And all between those shores, and my ever
running Mississippi with bends and
chutes,

DRUM-TAPS

And my Illinois fields, and my Kansas fields,
and my fields of Missouri,
The Continent, devoting the whole identity
without reserving an atom,
Pour in! whelm that which asks, which sings,
with all and the yield of all,
Fusing and holding, claiming, devouring the
whole,
No more with tender lip, nor musical labial
sound,
But out of the night emerging for good, our
voice persuasive no more,
Croaking like crows here in the wind.

Poet

My limbs, my veins dilate, my theme is clear
at last,
Banner so broad advancing out of the night,
I sing you haughty and resolute,
I burst through where I waited long, too
long, deafen'd and blinded,
My hearing and tongue are come to me (a
little child taught me),
I hear from above, O pennant of war, your
ironical call and demand,
Insensate! insensate! (yet I at any rate chant
you) O banner!
Not houses of peace indeed are you, nor any
nor all their prosperity (if need be, you

DRUM-TAPS

shall again have every one of those houses
to destroy them,

You thought not to destroy those valuable
houses, standing fast, full of comfort, built
with money,

May they stand fast, then? not an hour except
you above them and all stand fast);

O banner, not money so precious are you,
not farm produce you, nor the material
good nutriment,

Nor excellent stores, nor landed on wharves
from the ships,

Not the superb ships with sail-power or steam-
power, fetching and carrying cargoes.

Nor machinery, vehicles, trade, nor revenues—
but you as henceforth I see you,

Running up out of the night, bringing your
cluster of stars (ever-enlarging stars),

Divider of daybreak you, cutting the air,
touch'd by the sun, measuring the sky,

(Passionately seen and yearn'd for by one
poor little child,

While other remain busy or smartly talking,
for ever teaching thrift, thrift);

O you up there! O pennant! where you un-
dulate like a snake hissing so curious,

Out of reach, an idea only, yet furiously fought
for, risking bloody death, loved by me.

So loved—O you banner leading the day with
stars brought from the night!

DRUM-TAPS

Valueless, object of eyes, over all and demanding all—(absolute owner of all)—O banner and pennant!

I too leave the rest—great as it is, it is nothing—houses, machines are nothing—I see them not,

I see but you, O warlike pennant! O banner so broad, with stripes, I sing you only, Flapping up there in the wind.

DRUM-TAPS

RISE, O DAYS, FROM YOUR FATHOM- LESS DEEPS

1

RISE, O days, from your fathomless deeps,
till you loftier, fiercer sweep,
Long for my soul hungering gymnastic I de-
vour'd what the earth gave me,
Long I roam'd the woods of the north, long
I watch'd Niagara pouring,
I travell'd the prairies over and slept on their
breast, I cross'd the Nevadas, I cross'd
the plateaus,
I ascended the towering rocks along the Pa-
cific, I sail'd out to sea,
I sail'd through the storm, I was refresh'd
by the storm,
I watch'd with joy the threatening maws of
the waves,
I mark'd the white combs where they career'd
so high, curling over,
I heard the wind piping, I saw the black
clouds,
Saw from below what arose and mounted
(O superb! O wild as my heart, and pow-
erful!),
Heard the continuous thunder as it bellow'd
after the lightning,

DRUM-TAPS

Noted the slender and jagged threads of lightning as sudden and fast amid the din they chased each other across the sky ;
These, and such as these, I, elate, saw—saw with wonder, yet pensive and masterful,
All the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me,
Yet there with my soul I fed, I fed content, supercilious.

2

'Twas well, O soul—'twas a good preparation you gave me,
Now we advance our latent and ampler hunger to fill,
Now we go forth to receive what the earth and the sea never gave us,
Not through the mighty woods we go, but through the mightier cities,
Something for us is pouring now more than Niagara pouring,
Torrents of men (sources and rills of the North-west, are you indeed inexhaustible?),
What, to pavements and homesteads here, what were those storms of the mountains and sea?
What, to passions I witness around me to-day? was the sea risen?

DRUM-TAPS

Was the wind piping the pipe of death under
the black clouds?

Lo! from deeps more unfathomable, something
more deadly and savage,

Manhattan rising, advancing with menacing
front—Cincinnati, Chicago, unchain'd;

What was that swell I saw on the ocean?
behold what comes here,

How it climbs with daring feet and hands—
how it dashes!

How the true thunder bellows after the light-
ning—how bright the flashes of lightning!

How Democracy with desperate vengeful port
strides on, shown through the dark by
those flashes of lightning!

(Yet a mournful wail and low sob I fancied I
heard through the dark,

In a lull of the deafening confusion.)

3

Thunder on! stride on, Democracy! strike
with vengeful stroke!

And do you rise higher than ever yet, O days,
O cities!

Crash heavier, heavier yet, O storms! you have
done me good,

My soul prepared in the mountains absorbs
your immortal strong nutriment,

DRUM-TAPS

Long had I walk'd my cities, my country roads
through farms, only half satisfied,
One doubt nauseous undulating like a snake,
crawl'd on the ground before me,
Continually preceding my steps, turning upon
me oft, ironically hissing low ;
The cities I loved so well I abandon'd and
left, I sped to the certainties suitable to
me,
Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal
energies and Nature's dauntlessness,
I refresh'd myself with it only, I could relish
it only,
I waited the bursting forth of the pent fire—
on the water and air I waited long ;
But now I no longer wait, I am fully satisfied,
I am gluttoned,
I have witness'd the true lightning, I have
witness'd my cities electric,
I have lived to behold man burst forth and
warlike America rise,
Hence I will seek no more the food of the
northern solitary wilds,
No more the mountains roam or sail the
stormy sea.

DRUM-TAPS

VIRGINIA—THE WEST

THE noble sire fallen on evil days,
I saw with hand uplifted, menacing, brand-
ishing,
(Memories of old in abeyance, love and faith
in abeyance),
The insane knife toward the Mother of All.

The noble son on sinewy feet advancing,
I saw, out of the land of prairies, land of
Ohio's waters and of Indiana,
To the rescue the stalwart giant hurry his
plenteous offspring,
Drest in blue, bearing their trusty rifles on
their shoulders.

Then the Mother of All with calm voice
speaking,
As to you Rebellious (I seemed to hear her
say), why strive against me, and why
seek my life?
When you yourself for ever provide to de-
fend me?
For you provided me Washington—and now
these also.

DRUM-TAPS

CITY OF SHIPS

CITY of ships!

(O the black ships! O the fierce ships!
O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steamships and
sail-ships!)

City of the world! (for all races are here,
All the lands of the earth make contribu-
tions here);

City of the sea! city of hurried and glittering
tides!

City whose gleeful tides continually rush or
recede, whirling in and out with eddies
and foam!

City of wharves and stores—city of tall
façades of marble and iron!

Proud and passionate city—mettlesome, mad,
extravagant city!

Spring up, O city—not for peace alone, but
be indeed yourself, warlike!

Fear not—submit to no models but your own,
O city!

Behold me—incarnate me as I have incarnated
you!

I have rejected nothing you offer'd me—whom
you adopted I have adopted,

Good or bad I never question you—I love
all—I do not condemn anything,

DRUM-TAPS

I chant and celebrate all that is yours—yet
peace no more,
In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum
of war is mine,
War, red war is my song through your streets,
O city!

DRUM-TAPS

THE CENTENARIAN'S STORY

*Volunteer of 1861-2 (at Washington Park,
Brooklyn, assisting the Centenarian)*

GIVE me your hand, old Revolutionary,
The hill-top is nigh, but a few steps (make
room, gentlemen),
Up the path you have follow'd me well, spite
of your hundred and extra years,
You can walk, old man, though your eyes are
almost done,
Your faculties serve you, and presently I must
have them serve me.

Rest, while I tell what the crowd around us
means,
On the plain below recruits are drilling and
exercising,
There is the camp, one regiment departs to-
morrow,
Do you hear the officers giving their orders?
Do you hear the clank of the muskets?

Why, what comes over you now, old man?
Why do you tremble and clutch my hand so
convulsively?

DRUM-TAPS

The troops are but drilling, they are yet sur-
rounded with smiles,
Around them at hand the well-drest friends
and the women,
While splendid and warm the afternoon sun
shines down,
Green the midsummer verdure and fresh blows
the dallying breeze,
O'er proud and peaceful cities and arm of
the sea between.

But drill and parade are over, they march
back to quarters,
Only hear that approval of hands! hear what
a clapping!

As wending the crowds now part and dis-
perse—but we, old man,
Not for nothing have I brought you hither—
we must remain,
You to speak in your turn, and I to listen
and tell.

The Centenarian

When I clutch'd your hand it was not with
terror,
But suddenly pouring about me here on every
side,

DRUM-TAPS

And below there where the boys were drill-
ing, and up the slopes they ran,
And where tents are pitch'd, and wherever
you see south and south-east and south-
west,
Over hill, across lowlands, and in the skirts
of woods,
And along the shores, in mire (now fill'd over)
came again and suddenly raged,
As eighty-five years a-gone no mere parade
receiv'd with applause of friends,
But a battle which I took part in myself—
aye, long ago as it is, I took part in it,
Walking then this hill-top, this same ground.

Aye, this is the ground,
My blind eyes even as I speak behold it re-
peopled from graves,
The years recede, pavements and stately houses
disappear,
Rude forts appear again, the old hoop'd guns
are mounted,
I see the lines of rais'd earth stretching from
river to bay,
I mark the vista of waters, I mark the up-
lands and slopes;
Here we lay encamp'd, it was this time in
summer also.

DRUM-TAPS

As I talk I remember all, I remember the
Declaration,
It was read here, the whole army paraded,
it was read to us here,
By his staff surrounded the General stood in
the middle, he held up his unsheath'd
sword,
It glitter'd in the sun in full sight of the
army.

'Twas a bold act then—the English war-ships
had just arrived,
We could watch down the lower bay where
they lay at anchor,
And the transports swarming with soldiers.

A few days more and they landed, and then
the battle.

Twenty thousand were brought against us,
A veteran force furnish'd with good artillery.

I tell not now the whole of the battle,
But one brigade early in the forenoon order'd
forward to engage the red-coats,
Of that brigade I tell, and how steadily it
march'd,
And how long and well it stood confronting
death.

DRUM-TAPS

Who do you think that was marching steadily
sternly confronting death?

It was the brigade of the youngest men, two
thousand strong,

Rais'd in Virginia and Maryland, and most
of them known personally to the General.

Jauntily forward they went with quick step
toward Gowanus' waters,

Till of a sudden unlook'd for by defiles through
the woods, gain'd at night,

The British advancing, rounding in from the
east, fiercely playing their guns,

That brigade of the youngest was cut off and
at the enemy's mercy.

The General watch'd them from this hill,
They made repeated desperate attempts to
burst their environment,

Then drew close together, very compact, their
flag flying in the middle,

But O from the hills how the cannon were
thinning and thinning them!

It sickens me yet, that slaughter!

I saw the moisture gather in drops on the face
of the General,

I saw how he wrung his hands in anguish.

DRUM-TAPS

Meanwhile the British manoeuvr'd to draw us
out for a pitch'd battle,
But we dared not trust the chances of a
pitch'd battle.

We fought the fight in detachments,
Sallying forth we fought at several points, but
in each the luck was against us,
Our foe advancing, steadily getting the best
of it, push'd us back to the works on
this hill,
Till we turn'd menacing here, and then he left
us.

That was the going out of the brigade of the
youngest men, two thousand strong,
Few return'd, nearly all remain in Brooklyn.

That and here my General's first battle,
No women looking on nor sunshine to bask
in, it did not conclude with applause,
Nobody clapp'd hands here then.

But in darkness, in mist on the ground under
a chill rain,
Wearied that night we lay foil'd and sullen,
While scornfully laugh'd many an arrogant
lord off against us encamp'd,
Quite within hearing, feasting, clinking wine-
glasses together over their victory.

DRUM-TAPS

So dull and damp and another day,
But the night of that, mist lifting, rain ceas-
ing,
Silent as a ghost while they thought they were
sure of him, my General retreated.

I saw him at the river-side,
Down by the ferry lit by torches, hastening
the embarcation;
My General waited till the soldiers and
wounded were all pass'd over,
And then (it was just ere sunrise), these eyes
rested on him for the last time.

Every one else seem'd fill'd with gloom,
Many no doubt thought of capitulation.

But when my General pass'd me,
As he stood in his boat and look'd toward
the coming sun,
I saw something different from capitulation.

Terminus

Enough, the Centenarian's story ends,
The two, the past and present, have inter-
changed,
I myself as connecter, as chansonnier of a
great future, am now speaking.

DRUM-TAPS

And is this the ground Washington trod?
And these waters I listlessly daily cross, are
these the waters he cross'd,
As resolute in defeat as other generals in
their proudest triumphs?

I must copy the story, and send it eastward
and westward,
I must preserve that look as it beam'd on you
rivers of Brooklyn.

See—as the annual round returns the phan-
toms return,
It is the 27th of August and the British
have landed,
The battle begins and goes against us, behold
through the smoke Washington's face,
The brigade of Virginia and Maryland have
march'd forth to intercept the enemy,
They are cut off, murderous artillery from
the hills plays upon them,
Rank after rank falls, while over them silently
droops the flag,
Baptized that day in many a young man's
bloody wounds,
In death, defeat, and sisters', mothers' tears.

DRUM-TAPS

Ah, hills and slopes of Brooklyn! I perceive
you are more valuable than your owners
supposed;

In the midst of you stands an encampment
very old,
Stands for ever the camp of that dead brigade.

DRUM-TAPS

CAVALRY CROSSING A FORD

A LINE in long array where they wind be-
twixt green islands,
They take a serpentine course, their arms
flash in the sun—hark to the musical
clank,
Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing
horses loitering stop to drink,
Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each
person a picture, the negligent rest on the
saddles,
Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are
just entering the ford—while,
Scarlet and blue and snowy white,
The guidon flags flutter gaily in the wind.

DRUM-TAPS

BIVOUAC ON A MOUNTAIN SIDE

I SEE before me now a travelling army halting,
Below a fertile valley spread, with barns and
the orchards of summer,
Behind, the terraced sides of a mountain,
abrupt, in places rising high,
Broken, with rocks, with clinging cedars, with
tall shapes dingily seen,
The numerous camp-fires scatter'd near and
far, some away up on the mountain,
The shadowy forms of men and horses, loom-
ing, large-sized, flickering,
And over all the sky—the sky! far, far out of
reach, studded, breaking out, the eternal
stars.

DRUM-TAPS

AN ARMY CORPS ON THE MARCH

WITH its cloud of skirmishers in advance,
With now the sound of a single shot snapping
like a whip, and now an irregular volley,
The swarming ranks press on and on, the
dense brigades press on,
Glittering dimly, toiling under the sun—the
dust-cover'd men,
In columns rise and fall to the undulations
of the ground,
With artillery interspers'd—the wheels rum-
ble, the horses sweat.
As the army corps advances.

DRUM-TAPS

BY THE BIVOUCAC'S FITFUL FLAME

By the bivouac's fitful flame,
A procession winding around me, solemn and
sweet and slow—but first I note,
The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and
woods' dim outline,
The darkness lit by spots of kindled fire, the
silence,
Like a phantom far or near an occasional
figure moving,
The shrubs and trees (as I lift my eyes they
seem to be stealthily watching me),
While wind in procession thoughts, O tender
and wondrous thoughts,
Of life and death, of home and the past and
loved, and of those that are far away;
A solemn and slow procession there as I sit
on the ground,
By the bivouac's fitful flame.

DRUM-TAPS

COME UP FROM THE FIELDS, FATHER

COME up from the fields, father, here's a letter
from our Pete,
And come to the front door, mother, here's
a letter from thy dear son.

Lo, 'tis autumn,
Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower
and redder,

Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves
fluttering in the moderate wind,
Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and
grapes on the trellis'd vines,
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on the
vines?)

Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were
lately buzzing?)
Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent
after the rain, and with wondrous clouds,
Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful,
and the farm prospers well.

Down in the fields all prospers well,
But now from the fields come, father, come
at the daughter's call,
And come to the entry, mother, to the front
door come right away.

DRUM-TAPS

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous,
her steps trembling,
She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor
adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name
is sign'd,
O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O
stricken mother's soul!
All swims before her eyes, flashes with black,
she catches the main words only,
Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast,*
cavalry skirmish, taken to hospital,
At present low, but will soon be better.

Ah, now the single figure to me,
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all
its cities and farms,
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head,
very faint,
By the jamb of a door leans.

Grieve not so, dear mother (the just-grown
daughter speaks through her sobs,
The little sisters huddle around speechless and
dismay'd),
See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will
soon be better.

DRUM-TAPS

Alas, poor boy, he will never be better (nor
maybe needs to be better, that brave and
simple soul),

While they stand at home at the door he is
dead already,

The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,

She with thin form presently drest in black,
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night
fitfully sleeping, often waking,

In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with
one deep longing,

O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent
from life escape and withdraw,

To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead
son.

DRUM-TAPS

VIGIL STRANGE I KEPT ON THE FIELD ONE NIGHT

VIGIL strange I kept on the field one night ;
When you, my son and my comrade, dropt
at my side that day,
One look I but gave which your dear eyes
return'd with a look I shall never forget,
One touch of your hand to mine, O boy,
reach'd up as you lay on the ground,
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-
contested battle,
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at
last again I made my way,
Found you in death so cold, dear comrade,
found your body, son of responding kisses
(never again on earth responding),
Bared your face in the starlight, curious the
scene, cool blew the moderate night-wind,
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly
around me the battle-field spreading,
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the
fragrant silent night,
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn
sigh, long, long I gazed,
Then on the earth partially reclining sat by
your side leaning my chin in my hands,

DRUM-TAPS

Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic
hours with you, dearest comrade—not a
tear, not a word,
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you,
my son and my soldier,
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new
ones upward stole,
Vigil final for you, brave boy (I could not
save you, swift was your death,
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living,
I think we shall surely meet again),
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed
just as the dawn appear'd,
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd
well his form,
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully
over head and carefully under feet,
And there and then and bathed by the rising
sun, my son in his grave, in his rude-dug
grave I deposited,
Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of
night and battlefield dim,
Vigil for boy of responding kisses (never
again on earth responding),
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never
forget, how as day brighten'd,
rose from the chill ground and folded my
soldier well in his blanket,
and buried him where he fell.

DRUM-TAPS

A MARCH IN THE RANKS HARD- PREST, AND THE ROAD UN- KNOWN

A MARCH in the ranks hard-prest, and the road
unknown,
A route through a heavy wood, with muffled
steps in the darkness,
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullied
remnant retreating,
Till after midnight glimmer upon us the light
of a dim-lighted building,
We come to an open space in the woods, and
halt by the dim-lighted building,
'Tis a large old church at the crossing road
now an impromptu hospital,
Entering but for a minute I see a sight be-
yond all the pictures and poems ever
made,
Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just
by moving candles and lamps,
And by one great pitchy torch stationary with
wild red flame and clouds of smoke,
By these, crowds, groups of forms vaguely
see on the floor, some in the pews laid
down,
At my feet more distinctly a soldier, a me-
lad, in danger of bleeding to death (he
is shot in the abdomen),

DRUM-TAPS

I stanch the blood temporarily (the youngster's
face is white as a lily),
Then before I depart I sweep my eyes o'er
the scene fain to absorb it all,
Faces, varieties, postures beyond description,
most in obscurity, some of them dead,
Surgeons operating, attendants holding lights,
the smell of ether, the odour of blood,
The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms,
the yard outside also fill'd,
Some on the bare ground, some on planks or
stretchers, some in the death-spasm sweat-
ing,
An occasional scream or cry, the doctor's
shouted orders or calls,
The glisten of the little steel instruments
catching the glint of the torches,
These I resume as I chant, I see again the
forms, I smell the odour,
Then hear outside the orders given, *Fall in,*
my men, fall in;
But first I bend to the dying lad, his eyes
open, a half-smile gives he me,
Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed
forth to the darkness,
Resuming, marching, ever in darkness march-
ing, on in the ranks,
The unknown road still marching.

DRUM-TAPS

A SIGHT IN CAMP IN THE DAYBREAK GREY AND DIM

A SIGHT in camp in the daybreak grey and
dim,
As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path
near by the hospital tent,
Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought
out there untended lying,
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish
woollen blanket,
Grey and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.

Curious I halt and silent stand,
Then with light fingers I from the face of the
nearest the first just lift the blanket;
Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim
with well-grey'd hair, and flesh all sunken
about the eyes?
Who are you, my dear comrade?

Then to the second I step—and who are you
my child and darling?
Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet bloom-
ing?

DRUM-TAPS

Then to the third—a face nor child nor old,
very calm, as of beautiful yellow-white
ivory;

Young man, I think I know you—I think this
face is the face of the Christ himself,
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here
again he lies.

DRUM-TAPS

AS TOILSOME I WANDER'D VIRGINIA'S WOODS

As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,
To the music of rustling leaves kick'd by my
feet (for 'twas autumn),
I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of
a soldier;
Mortally wounded he and buried on the retreat
(easily all could I understand),
The halt of a mid-day hour, when up! no
time to lose—yet this sign left,
On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree
by the grave,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

Long, long I muse, then on my way go wander-
ing,
Many a changeful season to follow, and many
a scene of life,
Yet at times through changeful season and
scene, abrupt, alone, or in the crowded
street.
Comes before me the unknown soldier's grave,
comes the inscription rude in Virginia's
woods,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

DRUM-TAPS

NOT THE PILOT

Not the pilot has charged himself to bring his
ship into port, though beaten back and
many times baffled;

Not the pathfinder penetrating inland weary
and long,

By deserts parch'd, snows chill'd, rivers wet,
perseveres till he reaches his destination,

More than I have charged myself, heeded or
unheeded, to compose a march for these
States,

For a battle-call, rousing to arms if need be,
years, centuries hence.

DRUM-TAPS

· YEAR THAT TREMBLED AND REEL'D BENEATH ME

YEAR that trembled and reel'd beneath me!
Your summer wind was warm enough, yet the
air I breathed froze me,
A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and
darken'd me,
Must I change my triumphant songs? said I
to myself,
Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges
of the baffled?
And sullen hymns of defeat?

DRUM-TAPS

THE WOUND-DRESSER

1

AN old man bending I come among new faces,
Years looking backward resuming in answer
to children,
Come tell us, old man, as from young men and
maidens that love me,
(Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the
alarum, and urge relentless war,
But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd
and I resign'd myself,
To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or
silently watch the dead;)
Years hence of these scenes, of these furious
passions, these chances,
Of unsurpass'd heroes (was one side so brave?
the other was equally brave;)
Now be witness again, paint the mightiest
armies of earth,
Of those armies so rapid, so wondrous, what
saw you to tell us?
What stays with you latest and deepest? of
curious panics,
Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremen-
dous what deepest remains?

DRUM-TAPS

2

O maidens and young men I love and the
love me,
What you ask of my days those the stranger
and sudden your talking recalls,
Soldier alert I arrive after a long march
cover'd with sweat and dust,
In the nick of time I come, plunge in the
fight, loudly shout in the rush of suc-
cessful charge,
Enter the captur'd works—yet lo, like a swift
running river they fade,
Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not on
soldiers' perils or soldiers' joys,
(Both I remember well—many the hardship
few the joys, yet I was content).

But in silence, in dreams' projections,
While the world of gain and appearance and
mirth goes on,
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves
wash the imprints off the sand,
With hinged knees returning I enter the door
(while for you up there,
Whoever you are, follow without noise and
of strong heart).

DRUM-TAPS

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
Where they lie on the ground after the battle
brought in,
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass,
the ground,
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under
the roof'd hospital,
To the long rows of cots up and down each
side I return,
To each and all one after another I draw
near, not one do I miss,
An attendant follows holding a tray, he car-
ries a refuse pail,
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood,
emptied, and fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress
wounds,
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet
unavoidable,
One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor
boy! I never knew you,
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment
to die for you, if that would save you.

DRUM-TAPS

3

On, on I go (open doors of time! open hospital doors!)
The crush'd head I dress (poor crazed hand
tear not the bandage away),
The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet
through and through I examine,
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already
the eye, yet life struggles hard,
(Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful
death!)
In mercy come quickly).

From the stump of the arm, the amputated
hand,
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash
off the matter and blood,
Back on his pillow the soldier bends with
curv'd neck and side-falling head,
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares
not look on the bloody stump,
And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep,
But a day or two more, for see the frame all
wasted and sinking,
And the yellow-blue countenance see.

DRUM-TAPS

dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with
the bullet-wound,
ease the one with a gnawing and putrid
gangrene, so sickening, so offensive,
while the attendant stands behind aside me
holding the tray and pail.

am faithful, I do not give out,
the fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the
abdomen,
these and more I dress with impassive hand
(yet deep in my breast a fire, a burning
flame).

4

ous in silence in dreams' projections,
returning, resuming, I thread my way through
the hospitals,
the hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing
hand,
sit by the restless all the dark night, some
are so young,
some suffer so much, I recall the experience
sweet and sad,
Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck
have cross'd and rested,
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded
lips).

DRUM-TAPS

LONG, TOO LONG, AMERICA

LONG, too long, America,
Travelling roads all even and peaceful you
learn'd from joys and prosperity only,
But now, ah now, to learn from crises of an-
guish, advancing, grappling with direst
fate and recoiling not,
And now to conceive and show to the world
what your children en-masse really are,
(For who except myself has yet conceiv'd what
your children en-masse really are?)

DRUM-TAPS

GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN

- GIVE me the splendid silent sun with all his
beams full-dazzling,
Give me juicy autumnal fruit ripe and red
from the orchard,
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass
grows,
Give me an arbour, give me the trellis'd grape,
Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me serene-
moving animals teaching content,
Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high
plateaus west of the Mississippi, and I
looking up at the stars,
Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beauti-
ful flowers where I can walk undisturb'd,
Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd woman
of whom I should never tire,
Give me a perfect child, give me away aside
from the noise of the world a rural domes-
tic life,
Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse
by myself, for my own ears only,
Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me
again O Nature your primal sanities!

DRUM-TAPS

These demanding to have them (tired with
ceaseless excitement, and rack'd by the
war-strife),
These to procure incessantly asking, rising
in cries from my heart,
While yet incessantly asking still I adhere to
my city,
Day upon day and year upon year, O city,
walking your streets,
Where you hold me enchain'd a certain time
refusing to give me up,
Yet giving to make me gluttoned, enrich'd of
soul, you give me forever faces;
(O I see what I sought to escape, confronting,
reversing my cries,
I see my own soul trampling down what it
ask'd for).

2

Keep your splendid silent sun,
Keep your woods, O Nature, and the quiet
places by the woods,
Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and
your corn-fields and orchards,
Keep the blossoming buckwheat fields where
the Ninth-month bees hum:

DRUM-TAPS

- Give me faces and streets—give me these phantoms incessant and endless along the trottoirs!
- Give me interminable eyes—give me women—give me comrades and lovers by the thousand!
- Let me see new ones every day—let me hold new ones by the hand every day!
- Give me such shows—give me the streets of Manhattan!
- Give me Broadway, with the soldiers marching—give me the sound of the trumpets and drums!
- (The soldiers in companies or regiments—some starting away, dush'd and reckless, Some, their time up, returning with thinn'd ranks, young, yet very old, worn, marching, noticing nothing;)
- Give me the shores and wharves heavy-fringed with black ships!
- O such for me! O an intense life, full to repletion and varied!
- The life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel, for me!
- The saloon of the steamer! the crowded excursion for me! the torchlight procession!
- The dense brigade bound for the war, with high piled military wagons following;

DRUM-TAPS

People, endless, streaming, with strong voices,
passions, pageants,
Manhattan streets with their powerful throbs,
with beating drums as now,
The endless and noisy chorus, the rustle and
clank of muskets (even the sight of the
wounded),
Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent mu-
sical chorus!
Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.

DRUM-TAPS

DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

THE last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is
looking,
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,
Up from the east the silvery round moon,
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phan-
tom moon,
Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,
And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd
bugles,
All the channels of the city streets they're
flooding,
As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,
And the small drums steady whirring,
And every blow of the great convulsive drums,
Strikes me through and through.

DRUM-TAPS

For the son is brought with the father,
(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault
they fell,
Two veterans son and father dropt together,
And the double grave awaits them).

Now nearer blow the bugles,
And the drums strike more convulsive,
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has
faded,
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,
('Tis some mother's large transparent face,
In heaven brighter glowing).

O strong dead-march, you please me!
O moon immense with your silvery face, you
soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans pass-
ing to burial!
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

DRUM-TAPS

OVER THE CARNAGE ROSE PRO- PHETIC A VOICE

OVER the carnage rose prophetic a voice,
Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the
problems of freedom yet,
Those who love each other shall become in-
vincible,
They shall yet make Columbia victorious.

Sons of the Mother of All, you shall yet be
victorious,
You shall yet laugh to scorn the attacks of all
the remainder of the earth.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers,
If need be a thousand shall sternly immolate
themselves for one.

One from Massachusetts shall be a Missour-
ian's comrade,
From Maine and from hot Carolina, and an-
other an Oregonese, shall be friends triune,
More precious to each other than all the
riches of the earth.

DRUM-TAPS

To Michigan, Florida perfumes shall tenderly
come,
Not the perfumes of flowers, but sweeter, and
wafted beyond death.

It shall be customary in the houses and
streets to see manly affection,
The most dauntless and rude shall touch face
to face lightly,
The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,
The continuance of Equality shall be com-
rades.

These shall tie you and band you stronger
than hoops of iron,
I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love
of lovers tie you.

(Were you looking to be held together by
lawyers?
Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will
so cohere.)

DRUM-TAPS

I SAW OLD GENERAL AT BAY

I SAW old General at bay,
(Old as he was, his grey eyes yet shone out in
battle like stars),
His small force was now completely hemmed
in, in his works,
He call'd for volunteers to run the enemy's
lines, a desperate emergency,
I saw a hundred and more step forth from the
ranks, but two or three were selected,
I saw them receive their orders aside, they
listen'd with care, the adjutant was very
grave,
I saw them depart with cheerfulness, freely
risking their lives.

DRUM-TAPS

THE ARTILLERYMAN'S VISION

WHILE my wife at my side lies slumbering,
and the wars are over long,
And my head on the pillow rests at home, and
the vacant midnight passes,
And through the stillness, through the dark,
I hear, just hear, the breath of my infant,
There in the room as I wake from sleep this
vision presses upon me;
The engagement opens there and then in
fantasy unreal,
The skirmishers begin, they crawl cautiously
ahead, I hear the irregular snap! snap!
I hear the sound of the different missiles, the
short *t-h-t!* *t-h-t!* of the rifle-balls,
I see the shells exploding leaving small white
clouds, I hear the great shells shriek-
ing as they pass,
The grape like the hum and whirr of wind
through the trees (tumultuous now the
contest rages),
All the scenes at the batteries rise in detail
before me again,
The crashing and smoking, the pride of the
men in their pieces,

DRUM-TAPS

The chief-gunner ranges and sights his piece
and selects a fuse of the right time,
After firing I see him lean aside and look
eagerly off to note the effect ;
Elsewhere I hear the cry of a regiment charg-
ing (the young colonel leads himself this
time with brandish'd sword),
I see the gaps cut by the enemy's volleys
(quickly fill'd up, no delay),
I breathe the suffocating smoke, then the flat
clouds hover low concealing all ;
Now a strange lull for a few seconds, not a
shot fired on either side,
Then resumed the chaos louder than ever, with
eager calls and orders of officers,
While from some distant part of the field the
wind wafts to my ears a shout of ap-
plause (some special success),
And ever the sound of the cannon far or near
(rousing even in dreams a devilish exul-
tation and all the old mad joy in the
depths of my soul),
And ever the hastening of infantry shifting
positions, batteries, cavalry, moving hither
and thither,
(The falling, dying, I heed not, the wounded
dripping and red I heed not, some to the
rear are hobbling),

DRUM-TAPS

Grime, heat, rush, aide-de-camps galloping by
or on a full run,
With the patter of small arms, the warning
s-s-t of the rifles (these in my vision I
hear or see),
And bombs bursting in air, and at night the
vari-colour'd rockets.

DRUM-TAPS

ETHIOPIA SALUTING THE COLOURS

Who are you, dusky woman, so ancient hardly
human,
With your woolly-white and turban'd head,
and bare bony feet?
Why rising by the roadside here, do you the
colours greet?

('Tis while our army lines Carolina's sands
and pines,
Forth from thy hovel door thou, Ethiopia,
com'st to me,
As under doughty Sherman I march toward
the sea.)

*Me master years a hundred since from my
parents sunder'd,
A little child, they caught me as the savage
beast is caught,
Then hither me across the sea the cruel slaver
brought.*

No further does she say, but lingering all the
day,
Her high-borne turban'd head she wags, and
rolls her darkling eye,

DRUM-TAPS

And courtesies to the regiments, the guidons
moving by.

What is it, fateful woman, so bleak, hardly
human?

Why wag your head with turban bound,
yellow, red, and green?

Are the things so strange and marvellous you
see or have seen?

DRUM-TAPS

NOT YOUTH PERTAINS TO ME

Not youth pertains to me,
Nor delicatessen, I cannot beguile the time with
talk,
Awkward in the parlour, neither a dancer nor
elegant,
In the learn'd coterie sitting constrain'd and
still, for learning inures not to me,
Beauty, knowledge, inure not to me—yet there
are two or three things inure to me,
[have nourish'd the wounded and sooth'd
many a dying soldier
And at intervals waiting or in the midst of
camp,
Composed these songs.

DRUM-TAPS

RACE OF VETERANS

RACE of veterans—race of victors!
Race of the soil, ready for conflict—race of
the conquering march!
(No more credulity's race, abiding-temper'd
race),
Race henceforth owning no law but the law of
itself,
Race of passion and the storm.

WORLD, TAKE GOOD NOTICE

WORLD, take good notice, silver stars fading,
Milky hue ript, west of white detaching,
Coals thirty-eight, baleful and burning,
Scarlet, significant, hands off warning,
Now and henceforth flaunt from these shores.

DRUM-TAPS

O TAN-FACED PRAIRIE-BOY

O TAN-FACED prairie-boy,
Before you came to camp came many a wel-
come gift,
Praises and presents came and nourishing
food, till at last among the recruits,
You came, taciturn, with nothing to give—we
but look'd on each other,
When lo! more than all the gifts of the world
you gave me.

LOOK DOWN, FAIR MOON

LOOK down, fair moon, and bathe this scene,
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods on
faces ghastly, swollen, purple,
On the dead on their backs with arms toss'd
wide,
Pour down your unstinted nimbus, sacred
moon.

DRUM-TAPS

RECONGILIATION

WORD over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

DRUM-TAPS

HOW SOLEMN AS ONE BY ONE

(*Washington City, 1865*)

How solemn as one by one,
As the ranks returning worn and sweaty, as
the men file by where I stand,
As the faces the masks appear, as I glance at
the faces studying the masks
(As I glance upward out of this page studying
you, dear friend, whoever you are),
How solemn the thought of my whispering soul
to each in the ranks, and to you,
I see behind each mask that wonder a kindred
soul,
O the bullet could never kill what you really
are, dear friend,
Nor the bayonet stab what you really are;
The soul! yourself I see, great as any, good
as the best,
Waiting secure and content, which the bullet
could never kill,
Nor the bayonet stab, O friend.

DRUM-TAPS

AS I LAY WITH MY HEAD IN YOUR LAP, CAMERADO

As I lay with my head in your lap, camerado,
The confession I made I resume, what I said
to you and the open air I resume,
I know I am restless and make others so,
I know my words are weapons full of danger,
full of death,
For I confront peace, security, and all the
settled laws, to unsettle them,
I am more resolute because all have denied
me than I could ever have been had all
accepted me,
I heed not and have never heeded either ex-
perience, cautions, majorities, nor ridicule,
And the threat of what is call'd hell is little
or nothing to me,
And the lure of what is call'd heaven is little
or nothing to me ;
Dear camerado ! I confess I have urged you
onward with me, and still urge you, with-
out the least idea what is our destination,
Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly
quell'd and defeated.

DRUM-TAPS

DELICATE CLUSTER

DELICATE cluster! flag of teeming life!
Covering all my lands—all my seashores lining!

Flag of death! (how I watch'd you through
the smoke of battle pressing!

How I heard you flap and rustle, cloth defiant!)

Flag cerulean—sunny flag, with the orbs of
night dappled!

Ah, my silvery beauty—ah, my woolly white
and crimson!

Ah, to sing the song of you, my matron
mighty!

My sacred one, my mother.

DRUM-TAPS

TO A CERTAIN CIVILIAN

DID you ask dulcet rhymes from me?
Did you seek the civilian's peaceful and languishing rhymes?
Did you find what I sang erewhile so hard to follow?
Why I was not singing erewhile for you to follow, to understand—nor am I now;
(I have been born of the same as the war was born,
The drum-corps' rattle is ever to me sweet music, I love well the martial dirge,
With slow wail and convulsive throb leading the officer's funeral;)
What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I? therefore leave my works,
And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and with piano-tunes,
For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.

DRUM-TAPS

LO, VICTRESS ON THE PEAKS

Lo, Victress on the peaks,
Where thou with mighty brow regarding the
world,
(The world, O Libertad, that vainly conspired
against thee),
Out of its countless beleaguering toils, after
thwarting them all,
Dominant, with the dazzling sun around thee,
Flauntest now unharm'd in immortal sound-
ness and bloom—lo, in these hours su-
preme,
No poem proud, I chanting bring to thee, nor
mastery's rapturous verse,
But a cluster containing night's darkness and
blood-dripping wounds,
And psalms of the dead,

DRUM-TAPS

SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE

(*Washington City, 1865*)

SPIRIT whose work is done—spirit of dreadful hours!
Ere departing fade from my eyes your forests of bayonets;
Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts (yet onward ever unfaltering pressing),
Spirit of many a solemn day and many a savage scene—electric spirit,
That with muttering voice through the war now closed, like a tireless phantom flitted,
Rousing the land with breath of flame, while you beat and beat the drum,
Now as the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the last, reverberates round me,
As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return from the battles,
As the muskets of the young men yet lean over their shoulders,
As I look on the bayonets bristling over their shoulders,

DRUM-TAPS

As those slanted bayonets, whole forests of
them appearing in the distance, approach
and pass on, returning homeward,
Moving with steady motion, swaying to and
fro to the right and left,
Evenly lightly rising and falling while the
steps keep time ;
Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one day,
but pale as death next day,
Touch my mouth ere you depart, press my lips
close,
Leave me your pulses of rage—bequeath them
to me—fill me with currents convulsive,
Let them scorch and blister out of my chants
when you are gone,
Let them identify you to the future in these
songs.

DRUM-TAPS

ADIEU TO A SOLDIER

ADIEU, O soldier,
You of the rude campaigning (which we
shared),
The rapid march, the life of the camp,
The hot contention of opposing fronts, the
long manœuvre,
Red battles with their slaughter, the stimulus,
the strong terrific game,
Spell of all brave and manly hearts, the trains
of time through you and like of you all
fill'd,
With war and war's expression.

Adieu, dear comrade,
Your mission is fulfill'd—but I, more war-
like,
Myself and this contentious soul of mine,
Still on our own campaigning bound,
Through untried roads with ambushes, oppo-
nents lined,
Through many a sharp defeat and many a
crisis, often baffled,
Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight
out—aye here,
To fiercer, weightier battles give expression.

DRUM-TAPS

TURN, O LIBERTAD

TURN, O Libertad, for the war is over,
From it and all henceforth expanding, doubt-
ing no more, resolute, sweeping the world,
Turn from lands retrospective recording proofs
of the past,
From the singers that sing the trailing glories
of the past,
From the chants of the feudal world, the tri-
umphs of kings, slavery, caste,
Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and
to come—give up that backward world,
Leave to the singers of hitherto, give them the
trailing past,
But what remains remains for singers for you
—wars to come are for you,
(Lo, how the wars of the past have duly in-
ured to you, and the wars of the present
also inure;)
Then turn, and be not alarm'd, O Libertad—
turn your undying face,
To where the future, greater than all the past,
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.

DRUM-TAPS

TO THE LEAVEN'D SOIL THEY TROD

To the leaven'd soil they trod calling I sing
for the last

(Forth from my tent emerging for good, loos-
ing, untying the tent-ropes),

In the freshness the forenoon air, in the far-
stretching circuits and vistas again to
peace restored,

To the fiery fields emanative and the endless
vistas beyond, to the South and the North,

To the leaven'd soil of the general Western
world to attest my songs,

To the Alleghanian hills and the tireless Mis-
sissippi,

To the rocks I calling sing, and all the trees
in the woods,

To the plains of the poems of heroes, to the
prairies spreading wide,

To the far-off sea and the unseen winds, and
the sane impalpable air;

And responding they answer all (but not in
words),

The average earth, the witness of war and
peace, acknowledges mutely,

The prairie draws me close, as the father to
bosom broad the son,

DRUM-TAPS

The Northern ice and rain that began me
nourish me to the end,
But the hot sun of the South is to fully ripen
my songs.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

1

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open
road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wher-
ever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself
am good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no
more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, queru-
lous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,
I do not want the constellations any nearer,
I know they are very well where they are,
I know they suffice for those who belong to
them.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,
I carry them, men and women, I carry them
with me wherever I go,
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of
them,
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in
return.)

2

You road I enter upon and look around, I
believe you are not all that is here,
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor
preference nor denial,

The black with his woolly head, the felon, the
diseas'd, the illiterate person, are not de-
nied;

The birth, the hasting after the physician, the
beggar's tramp, the drunkard's stagger,
the laughing party of mechanics,

The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage,
the fop, the eloping couple,

The early market-man, the hearse, the moving
of furniture into the town, the return
back from the town,

They pass, I also pass, anything passes, none
can be interdicted,

None but are accepted, none but shall be dear
to me.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!
You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give them shape!

You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable showers!

You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!

I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the edges!

You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-lined sides! you distant ships!

You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd façades! you roofs!

You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!

You windows whose transparent shells might expose so much!

You doors and ascending steps! you arches!

You grey stones of interminable pavements! you trodden crossings!

From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted to yourselves, and now would impart the same secretly to me,

From the living and the dead you have peopled your impassive surfaces, and the spirits thereof would be evident and amicable with me.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,
The picture alive, every part in its best light,
The music falling in where it is wanted, and
stopping where it is not wanted,
The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay
fresh sentiment of the road.

O highway I travel, do you say to me, *Do
not leave me?*

Do you say, *Venture not—if you leave me you
are lost?*

Do you say, *I am already prepared, I am well-
beaten and undenied, adhere to me?*

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to
leave you, yet I love you,

You express me better than I can express my-
self,

You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the
open air, and all free poems also,

I think I could stop here myself and do mir-
acles,

I think whatever I shall meet on the road I
shall like, and whoever beholds me shall
like me.

I think whoever I see must be happy.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
Listening to others, considering well what they say,
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space,
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,
I did not know I held so much goodness.

All seems beautiful to me,
I can repeat over to men and women, You have done such good to me I would do the same to you,
I will recruit for myself and you as I go,
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,
I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,
Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall bless me.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear
it would not amaze me,

Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women
appear'd it would not astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best
persons,

It is to grow in the open air and to eat and
sleep with the earth.

Here a great personal deed has room,
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the
whole race of men,

Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms
law and mocks all authority and all argu-
ment against it).

Here is the test of wisdom,
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it
to another not having it,

Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of
proof, is its own proof,

Applies to all stages and objects and qualities
and is content,

Is the certainty of the reality and immortality
of things, and the excellence of things;

Something there is in the float of the sight of
things that provokes it out of the soul.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not
prove at all under the spacious clouds and
along the landscape and flowing currents.

Here is realisation,

Here is a man tallied—he realises here what
he has in him,

The past, the future, majesty, love—if they
are vacant of you, you are vacant of
them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;
Where is he who tears off the husks for you
and me?

Where is he that undoes stratagems and en-
velopes for you and me?

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fash-
ion'd, it is apropos;

Do you know what it is as you pass to be
loved by strangers?

Do you know the talk of those turning eye-
balls?

7

Here is the efflux of the soul,

The efflux of the soul comes from within
through embower'd gates, ever provoking
questions,

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

These yearnings why are they? these thoughts
in the darkness why are they?

Why are there men and women that while
they are nigh me the sunlight expands
my blood?

Why when they leave me do my pennants of
joy sink flat and lank?

Why are there trees I never walk under but
large and melodious thoughts descend
upon me?

(I think they hang there winter and summer
on those trees and always drop fruit as
I pass);

What is it I interchange so suddenly with
strangers?

What with some driver as I ride on the seat
by his side?

What with some fisherman drawing his seine
by the shore as I walk by and pause?

What gives me to be free to a woman's and
man's good-will? what gives them to be
free to mine?

8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is
happiness,

I think it pervades the open air, waiting at
all times,

Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and sweetness of man and woman,
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter every day out of the roots of themselves, than it sprouts fresh and sweet continually out of itself).
Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat of the love of young and old,
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and attainments,
Toward it heaves the shuddering, longing ache of contact.

9

Allons! whoever you are come travel with me!
Travelling with me you find what never tires.

The earth never tires,
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, Nature is rude and incomprehensible at first,
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well envelop'd,
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than words can tell.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

Allons! we must not stop here,
However sweet these laid-up stores, however
convenient this dwelling we cannot re-
main here,
However shelter'd this port and however calm
these waters we must not anchor here,
However welcome the hospitality that sur-
rounds us we are permitted to receive it
but a little while.

10

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,
We will sail pathless and wild seas,
We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and
the Yankee clipper speeds by under full
sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the
elements,
Health, defiance, gaiety, self-esteem, curiosity;
Allons! from all formules!
From your formules, O bat-eyed and mate-
rialistic priests.

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the
burial waits no longer.

Allons! yet take warning!

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

He travelling with me needs the best blood,
thews, endurance,
None may come to the trial till he or she
bring courage and health,
Come not here if you have already spent the
best of yourself,
Only those may come who come in sweet and
determi'd bodies,
No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or vene-
real taint is permitted here.
(I and mine do not convince by arguments,
similes, rhymes,
We convince by our presence.)

11

Listen! I will be honest with you,
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer
rough new prizes,
These are the days that must happen to you:
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that
you earn or achieve,
You but arrive at the city to which you were
destin'd, you hardly settle yourself to sat-
isfaction before you are call'd by an irre-
sistible call to depart,
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and
mockings of those who remain behind you,

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

What beckonings of love you receive you shall
only answer with passionate kisses of
parting,
You shall not allow the hold of those who
spread their reach'd hands toward you.

12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to
belong to them!
They too are on the road—they are the swift
and majestic men—they are the greatest
women,
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a
mile of land,
Habitué of many distant countries, habitué
of far-distant dwellings,
Trusters of men and women, observers of
cities, solitary toilers,
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms,
shells of the shore,
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides,
tender helpers of children, bearers of chil-
dren,
Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves,
lowerers-down of coffins,
Journeys over consecutive seasons, over the
years, the curious years each emerging
from that which preceded it,

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

Journeymen as with companions, namely their
own diverse phases,
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealised
baby-days.
Journeymen gaily with their own youth, jour-
neymen with their bearded and well-grain'd
manhood,
Journeymen with their womanhood, ample, un-
surpass'd, content,
Journeymen with their own sublime old age of
manhood or womanhood,
Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the
haughty breadth of the universe.
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-
by freedom of death.

13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was
beginningless,
To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of
nights,
To merge all in the travel they tend to, and
the days and nights they tend to,
Again to merge them in the start of superior
journeys,
To see nothing anywhere but what you may
reach it and pass it,
To conceive no time, however distant, but
what you may reach it and pass it,

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

- To look up or down no road but it stretches
and waits for you, however long but it
stretches and waits for you,
To see no being, not God's or any, but you
also go thither,
To see no possession but you may possess it,
enjoying all without labour or purchase,
abstracting the feast yet not abstracting
one particle of it,
To take the best of the farmer's farm and the
rich man's elegant villa, and the chaste
blessings of the well-married couple, and
the fruits of orchards and flowers of gar-
dens,
To take to your use out of the compact cities
as you pass through,
To carry buildings and streets with you after-
ward wherever you go,
To gather the minds of men out of their
brains as you encounter them, to gather
the love out of their hearts,
To take your lovers on the road with you, for
all that you leave them behind you,
To know the universe itself as a road, as many
roads, as roads for travelling souls.
All parts away for the progress of souls,
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments
—all that was or is apparent upon this
globe or any globe, falls into niches and

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

corners before the procession of souls
along the grand roads of the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women
along the grand roads of the universe, all
other progress is the needed emblem and
sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad,
turbulent, feeble, dissatisfied,
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men,
rejected by men,
They go! they go! I know that they go, but
I know not where they go,
But I know that they go toward the best—
toward something great.

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or
woman come forth!
You must not stay sleeping and dallying there
in the house, though you built it, or
though it has been built for you.

Out of the dark confinement! out from behind
the screen!
It is useless to protest, I know all and expose
it.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

Behold through you as bad as the rest,
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping
of people,
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of
those wash'd and trimm'd faces,
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to
hear the confession,
Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulk-
ing and hiding it goes,
Formless and wordless through the streets of
the cities, polite and bland in the par-
lours,
In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in the
public assembly,
Home to the houses of men and women, at
the table, in the bedroom, everywhere,
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form up-
right, death under the breast-bones, hell
under the skull-bones,
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the
ribbons and artificial flowers,
Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not
a syllable of itself,
Speaking of anything else but never of itself.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

14

Allons! through struggles and wars!
The goal that was named cannot be counter-
manded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?
What has succeeded? yourself? your nation?
Nature?

Now understand me well—it is provided in
the essence of things that from any frui-
tion of success, no matter what, shall
come forth something to make a greater
struggle necessary.

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active
rebellion,
He going with me must go well arm'd,
He going with me goes often with spare diet,
poverty, angry enemies, desertions.

15

Allons! the road is before us!
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have
tried it well—be not detain'd!
Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten,
and the book on the shelf unopen'd!

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the
money remain unearn'd!

Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the
teacher!

Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the
lawyer plead in the court, and the judge
expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand!

I give you my love more precious than money,
I give you myself before preaching or law;

Will you give me yourself? will you come
travel with me?

Shall we stick by each other as long as we
live?

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